

CHALLENGE FROM A SOUTHERN BAPTIST PASTOR

June 28, 2000 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, wayoflife.org, fbns@wayoflife.org) -- A subscriber to the Fundamental Baptist Information Service sent my June 15 article, "Southern Baptist Convention Says No to Female Pastors," to his father-in-law, who is a Southern Baptist pastor. Following was the pastor's comments:

"Mr. Cloud commended us in one sentence but lambasted us in bunches of others. He also made some comments which he made either on his own skewed interpretation of facts or getting them from some unreliable source. 1. Number of women pastors. Mr. Cloud said of women ministers in the SBC, 'Of these (all women ministers), about 100 are pastors.' However, in our own SBC material it was printed on June 21, '...a preliminary study done by Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., which shows that only one-tenth of one percent of Southern Baptist Churches have women pastors (or a total of 35 or less churches among the overall 40,000 plus SBC churches.)' I personally and Brownsville Baptist agree with our SBC stand on women pastors. Our whole Haywood Baptist Association of churches also agree. 2. Mr. Cloud made it sound like many SBC churches are dually aligned with the SBC and CBF (a more liberal group of former SBC and dually aligned SBC churches). That number has declined considerably because the SBC Cooperative Program no longer accepts any funds from CBF churches (whether they are SBC designated, or as a funnel to designated CBF causes) as they used to. This program is two or more years old. This has caused many SBC dually aligned churches to make a choice and be either be totally SBC or CBF."

ANSWER FROM BROTHER CLOUD:

This pastor pretends that my article is purely a matter of personal "skewed interpretation of facts" and unreliable reports, but that is because he chose to ignore most of what I said. I made three points.

First, I noted that the new statement by the SBC about female pastors is not binding on the churches. That is an indisputable fact that is admitted by the conservative SBC leaders, and he ignored it.

Second, I noted that the new statement does not address the full problem of Baptist churches and women who are disobeying the Bible. That, too, is an indisputable fact, and he completely and conveniently ignored it.

Third, I noted that the threats about churches leaving the convention are largely empty and I mentioned that many churches are dually aligned with the liberal Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Southern Baptist Convention. I stand by that statement on the authority of many reports from the state level that I have followed the last few years. For example, when Russell Dilday was elected president of the Texas Baptist Convention in November 1998, he acknowledged the relationship between the BGCT and SBC would continue to change but said that they were not going to form a separate national denomination and that they were not going to divorce from the SBC (The Baptist Standard, Nov. 18, 1998).

An article in the Baptist Standard for late 1999 plainly stated that churches in the Baptist General Conference of Texas are dually affiliated and that funds go from these churches to the Southern Baptist Convention. "Some BGCT-affiliated churches have indeed strengthened their identities with and ties to the [Cooperative Baptist] Fellowship. Likewise, others have strengthened their bonds to the SBC. All of them do so with the blessing and aid of the BGCT, which channels funds and facilitates cooperation at the direction of the churches" (Baptist Standard, November 4, 1999). The same can be said for Virginia and many other states.

The Southern Baptist pastor claims that the "Cooperative Program no longer accepts any funds from CBF churches." I have checked the Southern Baptist Convention web site carefully and can find no mention of this. Under the sections on the Cooperative Program, there are no such restrictions mentioned. In fact, the Cooperative Program does not receive funds directly from churches, but from the state conventions. It is the state conventions that receive funds from the individual churches. Therefore, this claim holds no water.

Though he might not like to admit it, the fact remains that large numbers of churches are dually aligned with the SBC and with liberal organizations such as the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. That is not a skewed personal opinion. It is a fact.

As for the figure of 100 ordained women pastors or associate pastors, it was published by many standard news organizations, including the Associated Press ("Baptist Group Rules Out Women Pastors," June 15, 2000), the Washington Post ("Southern Baptists Vote to Ban Female Pastors," June 15, 2000), Cable News Network ("Southern Baptists Vote against Women Pastors," June 14, 2000), and the Chicago Tribune ("Southern Baptists Lean More to the Right Doctrinal Shift Would Ban Female Pastors," June 14, 2000). I have no reason to believe it is high. Just because this pastor can find a different statistic does not prove that I am in error, and his charge that I am using "an unreliable statistic" is baseless. He admits that the Midwestern study is "preliminary." In reality, there are probably more than 100 female pastors and associate pastors in SBC churches. The Fall 1997 edition of Folio, the newsletter of Baptist Women in Ministry, published the results of an extensive study and said there were 1,225 ordained women in the SBC and that roughly 200 of those were pastors and associate pastors. There were 16 states where women served as senior pastors in SBC churches. North Carolina had the most. The other top 10 states for employing Baptist clergywomen are, in order, Texas, Virginia, Georgia, Kentucky, South Carolina, Florida, Missouri, Alabama and Maryland. Furthermore, just this month, Chuck Kelley, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, stated that more women are now being

trained for ministry in Southern Baptist seminaries than at any other time in the SBC's history (Southern Baptist Convention web site, June 15, 2000).

One of the chief problems with the conservatives in the Southern Baptist Convention is that they refuse to obey the Bible's command to separate from false teachers and heretics and unbelievers and instead attempt to solve the heresy problem within the SBC through human politics. God's Word commands believers not to be yoked together with unbelievers, and if a denominational alliance is not a yoke there is no such thing.